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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9948
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1970
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0531
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0158
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4291
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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2018
TAGS: [UNHRC](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: ROK COURTS U.S. AND WESTERN VOTES ON HRC CANDIDACY
REF: A. STATE 46477

[1](#)B. SEOUL 878

Classified By: DCM Bill Stanton. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) In a May 15 breakfast meeting with Ambassadors and DCMs from Europe and the U.S., Vice Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan asked for support of the ROK's re-election bid to the U.N. Human Rights Council. VFM Kim noted that Japan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, East Timor, and Bahrain had also announced their candidacies for the four HRC seats.

[1](#)2. (C) VFM Kim said that, while in the past the ROK had not raised North Korea's human rights record in international fora, President Lee Myung-bak was committed to raising the issue because of his view that human rights had to be viewed from a universal perspective. Kim said that the ROK itself had recently undergone a human rights assessment under the Universal Periodic Review. The review concluded that areas of concern remained on the ROK's death penalty, National Security Law, migrant worker conditions, and discrimination against minorities and women.

[1](#)3. (C) Kim mentioned the ROK's support of the mandates for the special rapporteurs for both North Korea and Burma. In response to a question, Kim acknowledged the lack of freedom of religion and expression in a number of Islamic states but emphasized the need for Western democracies to build trust through dialogue with these states in order to bring about reform.

[1](#)4. (C) In a side conversation with the DCM, Ambassador Henrique Borges from Portugal indicated that Portugal would support Bahrain, Japan, Pakistan, and East Timor for the HRC seats. He added, however, that if East Timor was unable to gain sufficient support, Portugal would then back the ROK's candidacy. Amb. Borges personally thought that Pakistan's participation in the HRC was problematic, but said Portugal had agreed to support Pakistan's seat on the HRC in exchange for Pakistan's support of Portugal's bid for a Security Council seat.

[1](#)5. (U) Participants at the breakfast included Ambassadors from Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Austria, Turkey, Spain, and Portugal and the DCMs from Serbia and the U.S. ROK participants included VFM Kim, the Directors-General from MOFAT's North America and Europe Divisions, and the Deputy Director for Human Rights and Social Affairs.
VERSHBOW